

his team, and he changed. I don't know how I can make the point more clear, that any time we give up—and this is before they attacked us, by the way—revealing sources, methods, and what we use the information for, simply says to the enemy, “Change.”

Now, if you don't think there's an enemy out there, then I can understand why you ought to say, “Just tell us all you know.” I happen to know there's an enemy there. And the enemy wants to attack us. That is why I hope you can feel my passion about the PATRIOT Act. It is inexcusable to say to the American people, “We're going to be tough on terror but take away the very tools necessary to help fight these people.” And by the way, the tools exist still to fight medical fraud, in some cases, or other—or drug dealers. But with the expiration of the PATRIOT Act, it prevents us from using them to fight the terrorists. Now, that is just unbelievable. And I'm going to continue talking about this issue and reminding the American people about the importance of the PATRIOT Act and how necessary it is for us in Washington, DC, to do our job to protect you.

Let's see, who else? Jackson—Action Jackson [David Jackson, USA Today]. Got him a new job and everything.

President's Leadership

Q. Thank you, sir. One of the things we've seen this year is the reduction in your approval ratings. And I know how you feel about polls, but it appears to be taking something out of your political clout, as evidenced by the PATRIOT Act vote. What do you attribute your lower polls to, and are you worried that independents are losing confidence in your leadership?

The President. David, my job is to confront big challenges and lead. And I fully understand, everybody is not going to agree with my decisions. But the President's job is to do what he thinks is right, and that's what I'm going to continue to do.

Secondly, if people want to play politics with the PATRIOT Act, it's—let me just put—it's not in the best interests of the country, David. And yesterday—or this morning, I spoke to the Speaker, who called me. He said, “Mr. President, we had a pretty good couple of days. Got your budget passed. Got

the Katrina relief package going forward. We're supporting our troops. We've got the free trade”—we talked about passing CAFTA in the past. I mean, we've done a lot. And it's good for the country, by the way.

And so I'm just going to keep doing my job. Maybe you can keep focusing on all these focus groups and polls and all that business. My job is to lead, to keep telling the American people what I believe, work to bring people together to achieve a common objective, stand on principle, and that's the way I'm going to lead. I did so in 2005, and I'm going to do so in 2006.

Thank you all for coming. Happy holidays to you. Appreciate it.

NOTE: The President's news conference began at 10:32 a.m. in the East Room at the White House. In his remarks, he referred to Usama bin Laden, leader of the Al Qaida terrorist organization; former President Saddam Hussein of Iraq; President Mahmud Ahmadinejad of Iran; and Mayor C. Ray Nagin of New Orleans, LA. The Office of the Press Secretary also released a Spanish language transcript of this news conference.

Remarks During Visit to a “Toys for Tots” Collection Center

December 19, 2005

The President. Two-hundred-eighty-nine-thousand toys being distributed from here to children throughout DC.

It's an interesting process. The toys are collected; the Marines sort with DC police and distribute. Is that right?

Volunteer. Yes.

The President. Thanks for doing this—a great part of the compassion of our country. Now, I told our troops that, one, we're a great military; we're great because of the men and women who serve; we're great because of our strength. We're also great because they're decent people who care about a neighbor in need.

So Laura and I are thrilled to be here. Thank you all for your service. We're getting to work.

NOTE: The President spoke at 3:18 p.m. at the Naval District Washington Anacostia Annex.

Statement on House of Representatives Action on the Legislative Agenda

December 19, 2005

I appreciate the House of Representatives for its work to meet key national priorities, including funding the war on terror, voting to renew provisions of the PATRIOT Act, assisting hurricane victims, reducing our dependence on foreign sources of oil, and preparing against the threat of an avian flu pandemic. I also applaud the House for being wise with taxpayer dollars and approving a significant reduction in spending on entitlements. I thank the Speaker and the House leaders, Chairman Nussle, and the chairmen of the authorizing committees for their leadership. I urge the Senate to send these bills to my desk promptly so that I can sign them into law.

Statement on the Inauguration of the Afghan National Assembly

December 19, 2005

I congratulate the Afghan people on the inauguration of the new Afghan national assembly. Today is another milestone in Afghanistan's historic transition to a stable and democratic state governed by the rule of law. A freely and fairly elected legislature plays a vital role in the life of a representative democracy. I applaud the members of the national assembly on their service to their country and support their efforts, with President Karzai and his Government, to improve the lives of the Afghan people.

Message on the Observance of Christmas 2005

December 19, 2005

"Behold, a virgin shall conceive and bear a son, and his name shall be called Emmanuel"—which means, God with us.

Matthew 1:23

More than 2,000 years ago, a virgin gave birth to a Son, and the God of heaven came to Earth. Mankind had received its Savior,

and to those who had dwelled in darkness, the light of hope had come. Each Christmas, we celebrate that first coming anew, and we rejoice in the knowledge that the God who came to Earth that night in Bethlehem is with us still and will remain with us forever.

Christmas is a season of hope and joy, a time to give thanks for the blessing of Christ's birth and for the blessings that surround us every day of the year. We have much to be thankful for in this country, and we have a responsibility to help those in need. Jesus calls us to help others, and acts of kindness toward the less fortunate fulfill the spirit of the Christmas season.

On Christmas, we pray for freedom, justice, and peace on Earth. We remember those who have made the ultimate sacrifice for our country and for our freedom, and we ask for God's blessing on their loved ones. We ask God to watch over all of our men and women in uniform. Many are serving in distant lands, helping to advance the cause of freedom and peace. Our entire Nation is grateful to them and prays for their safe return.

Laura and I send our best wishes for a blessed and merry Christmas.

George W. Bush

NOTE: An original was not available for verification of the content of this message.

Message on the Observance of Hanukkah 2005

December 19, 2005

I send greetings to all those celebrating Hanukkah, the festival of lights.

More than 2,000 years ago, the Jewish people led a revolt against oppressors who forbade them to pray, study the Torah, or observe their religious customs. Led by Judah Maccabee and fueled by their faith, their small army triumphed over tyranny. When they reclaimed the desecrated Temple and prepared it to be purified and rededicated, the holy oil that should have lasted only one day instead burned for eight days. During Hanukkah, Jews around the world honor this miracle by lighting the menorah, a symbol of hope shining through darkness.